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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 RIYADH 000509

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS TO NEA/ARP (HARRIS, BLONG)

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TAGS: [IZ](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SA](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: SAUDIS ARREST AL-QAEDA RETURNEE WHILE IMPLICATING  
IRAN

REF: A. RIYADH 326

[B](#). RIYADH 272

[C](#). RIYADH 268

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Classified By: DCM David Rundell for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (S/NF) KEY POINTS:

- A Saudi citizen and al-Qaeda member returned to Saudi Arabia and voluntarily surrendered to Saudi authorities. Fahd Raqad Samir al-Quayli'i al-Ruwayli flew from Damascus to Jeddah on March 25 along with his Iraqi wife and son.
- Al-Ruwayli's arrest removes another name from the Saudis' 85 "most wanted" list, published by the Saudi Arabian government (SAG) February 3. He is the second figure on that list to give himself up.
- Al-Ruwayli traveled to Saudi Arabia on a fake Iraqi passport. He and his family returned to Saudi Arabia via Syria, apparently without the knowledge of the Syrian government.
- The Saudis also announced the extradition from Yemen of five suspected terrorists, and made public the video confession of a Saudi who surrendered himself last month. Increasingly, the Saudis publicly link al-Qaeda to Iran.

[2](#). (S/NF) COMMENT:

- Al-Ruwayli's return rewards the SAG's efforts to entice wayward Saudis back into the fold. The SAG's public messages to jihadists focus on a perception of amnesty if they return. The messages feature two appealing concepts to their true audience, Saudis abroad who have already joined AQ. One message is that a returnee's family will warmly welcome him back if he gives up the fight and comes home. The second message is that the returnee's prospects for rehabilitation improve if he surrenders before being captured. Both of these messages are consistent with the Saudi view that, with counseling and family involvement, some terrorists can be rehabilitated and reenter society.
- In recent days, media sources have linked Iran with al-Qaeda, likely at the SAG's behest. Making this connection serves to ramp up public pressure on Iran. Intentional or

not, this connection also builds on public anxiety over rising tensions with Saudi's Shi'a community. There is a growing tendency to see a Shi'a behind every threat to the Kingdom's security. While some of the 85 most wanted are believed to be in Iran, it is doubtful that the number reaches 35 (more likely ten or fewer). However, a public perception of Iran meddling with young Saudi minds allows the SAG to blame an outside entity for an internal problem -- a claim that does have merit. This public perception also plants doubt in the minds of young Saudis otherwise susceptible to terrorist recruiters.

#### END KEY POINTS AND COMMENT

¶3. (SBU) BREAKING NEWS: The Saudi Ministry of the Interior (MoI) announced al-Ruwayli's arrest on Thursday, March 27. MoI spokesman Major General Mansour al-Turki said that al-Ruwayli had spent the past six years moving between Iraq and Syria. He urged others to follow al-Ruwayli's example and "end their transgressions and surrender themselves to the nearest Saudi representative, who will facilitate their return home to their families."

¶4. (S/NF) COMING HOME: Al-Ruwayli originally traveled to Jordan in July 2003, and from there presumably proceeded to Iraq. Several weeks ago, al-Ruwayli's parents contacted Saudi authorities and informed them that he wanted to return to Saudi Arabia with his Iraqi wife and son, both of whom required Saudi entry visas. Al-Ruwayli and his family resided in Syria while the authorities facilitated their return, working through al-Ruwayli's parents. Once his arrangements with Saudi authorities were secured, al-Ruwayli

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and his family traveled by plane from Damascus to Jeddah. Al-Ruwayli traveled on a fake Iraqi passport under the name Muhammed al-Shammari. Authorities from the Saudi Ministry of Interior awaited his arrival and arrested him at the airport.

Authorities will hold, debrief, and eventually charge al-Ruwayli. He faces charges of recruiting for al-Qaeda (AQ), coordinating and facilitating travel for AQ members, departing Saudi Arabia to join AQ, and providing financial support and weapons to AQ elements.

#### ----- BRINGING SAUDIS HOME FROM YEMEN, WHILE BLAMING IRAN -----

¶5. (C) YEMEN EXTRADITES FIVE: March 29 MoI confirmed that Yemen extradited five Saudis wanted on terrorism charges. One of the five, Abdallah Abdalrahman Mohamed al-Harbi, appears on the list of 85 "most wanted" list. According to the March 30 Arab News, MoI spokesman Mansour al-Turki gave few details of the other four terror suspects and would not comment on an al-Sharq al-Awsat report that 35 of the 85 most wanted are in Iran planning attacks.

¶6. (C) LINKING THE IDEOLOGY TO IRAN: The Saudi government continues to leverage the media to discredit the violent jihadist mentality and pressure Iran to end its alleged support to the jihadists. March 27, the state-owned al-Ekhabriyah television channel interrupted regular programming to air a 17-minute video titled "The Truth - The Misguidance." The video showed confessions by Guantanamo returnees such as Mohamed Atiq Awayd al-Oufi al-Harbi, who surrendered in Yemen in February (Ref A). In the video, al-Harbi claimed that his group in Yemen was actually managed by the intelligence services of two unnamed countries. The names of the accused countries were "bleeped," but inferred Iran's involvement (Libya being the other culprit). He described his disillusionment and ultimate return to Saudi Arabia, where his family welcomed him home. The video concluded with al-Harbi urging other Saudis in Yemen to follow his path. Dubai-based and Saudi-owned al-Arabiyah

also covered al-Harbi's confession, where he explained that  
"Intelligence services of countries are leading those  
individuals operating under the name of Mujahidin."

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